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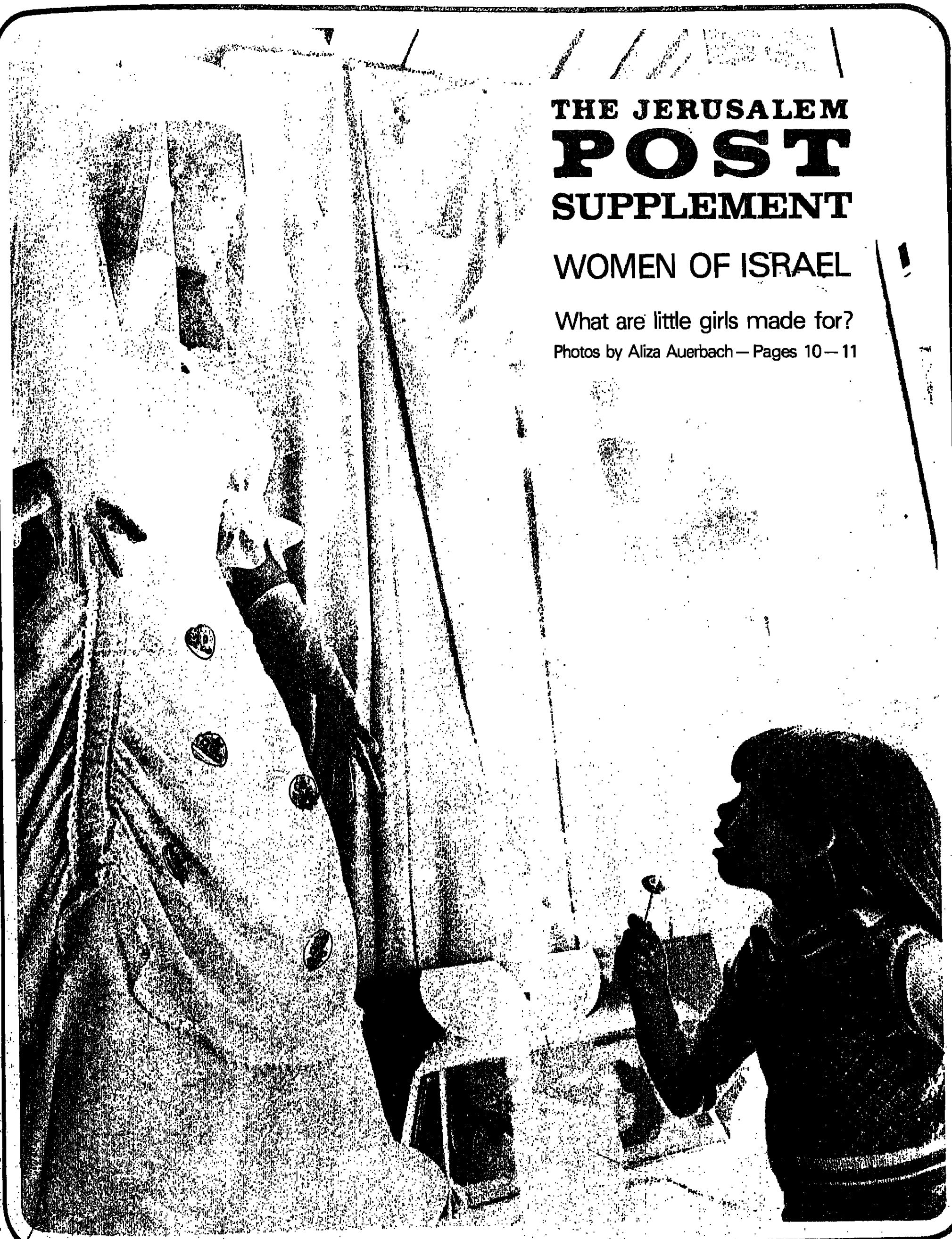


THE JERUSALEM POST SUPPLEMENT

WOMEN OF ISRAEL

What are little girls made for?

Photos by Aliza Auerbach — Pages 10—11



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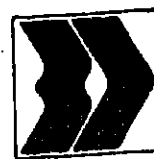
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The human side of the coin.



FIRST THE good news. Israeli women are not traded in marriage in exchange for animals, they do not have to share their husbands in polygamous marriages, they are not totally lacking in legal rights over themselves and over their children, they do not have their clitoris cut out when they are young girls to mutilate them sexually, and they do not have to till the land as illiterate peasants. In short, Israeli women are generally speaking not as oppressed as most of the women in Asian, African and Arab countries.

Now for the bad news. The political, economic, social and legal position of Israeli women is inferior to that of Israeli men. Like Western women, Europeans, Americans and Australians, they have achieved a high standard of living, health and education but they are fighting for equal status.

Despite all the myths of pioneering women, female soldiers and Golda, Israeli women have never had equality. Whatever independence may have been achieved by some in the early period has eroded over the years. In the long years of Labour-led governments, the position steadily deteriorated. Inequalities and discriminatory practices accumulated and became institutionalized. Over the last three years under the Likud government, significant measures were taken which brought about a dramatic regression.

The previous Labour government felt the pressure from women, their vaguely expressed dissatisfaction, and established a committee to investigate the position. Yitzhak Rabin appointed the Prime Minister's Committee on the Status of Woman in 1975. It was headed by Ora Namir, a Labour Knesset Member, and consisted of 82 members drawn from the whole spectrum of society. After two years, the committee issued a detailed report and 241 recommendations. But Labour had the good fortune to get elected out of office and therefore did not have to bear the responsibility for the recommendations.

THE REPORT was presented by Ora Namir to Prime Minister Menahem Begin not long after he assumed office and from then on, to all intents and purposes, has been buried. "With the exception of the army's Women's Corps which did deal a little with the recommendations, mainly because of a general shortage of manpower, nothing else has been done and we are going backwards so fast, that I can only call what's happening a decline in the status of women," Ora Namir said in an interview.

Some women who were closely associated with the work of the committee are bitter because the report is being ignored. Ora Ahimeir, who was the co-ordinator of the committee and edited the report, is one of these.

"The report gave the answer to anyone who asked. So what's wrong with the position of women in Israel? We gave the situation and the statistics. It is not a utopian document. It is moderate and careful and takes into account Israel's economic,

Trying to break the sex barrier

Augustine Zycher at the legal and social status of Israeli women today



Economic reality and lack of day care facilities for children are forcing women out of productive jobs and keeping them in traditional housewife roles. (Alisa Auerbach)

demographic and political problems and presents a practical programme for improving the status of women," said Ahimeir.

She feels that the Labour Party, especially its women members, also bears responsibility. "The Labour women did not try too hard to get the recommendations implemented under the present governments, because the achievements might be credited to the Likud," Ahimeir also faults women MKs for not working as a lobby.

The only concession which the Likud-led government made to the report was to establish, a year and a half after it was presented, the position of adviser to the Deputy Prime Minister on the status of women. The position as established was quite different from the one recommended by the committee, which called for an authority, with executive powers to push for and oversee the implementation of the other recommendations and also act as an ombudsman's office.

The first adviser was Professor Rivka Bar-Yosef. Not only was little done to implement the recommendations, but Bar-Yosef was totally powerless to prevent two laws which were most damaging to women — the de-liberalized abortion bill, and the women's national service bill. Bar-Yosef resigned and her replacement, Dr. Nitzza Libay recently

concluded office.

(To date there is still no office with centrality to Israeli women. Three years after the presentation of the report there is no office monitoring findings. Anyone who wants to find out whether the situation has improved or worsened, has to go around to each separate field and check.)

DR. LIBAY believes that her role is essentially what she can make out of it and her idea is to slowly build up the machinery of the office. "I cannot legislate, I cannot enforce, but I can and do sit in on ministerial committees and give my opinion on bills which affect women. Professor Yadin can delegate authority to me and I speak in his name. Yadin is very cooperative and so far there has been no proposal of mine which he has not accepted," she said.

As a lawyer, Libay has an interest in changing women's legal position. There are at present three bills she is concerned about. The first is the rape bill. She wants to change the laws of evidence relating to rape, which are based on the assumption that the woman is an unreliable and untrustworthy witness, usually preventing conviction of the rapist.

Another important piece of legislation is the Equal Opportunities Law, which has for some time been in the Knesset legal pipeline. It is intended

to guarantee equal pay and equal advancement and to end discriminatory practices in hiring, firing, training and work conditions. But still at stake is whether it will have teeth, or merely be another in the list of laws which on paper guarantee Israeli women equality but which in practice are ignored. The Equal Opportunities Law will be effective if women are empowered, with the full backing of a government office, to sue whenever they experience discrimination.

Dr. Libay also wants to see a Basic Law on equality between men and women passed.

Dr. Libay believes that the issue of equality between men and women can be separated from the issue of religion and state. However, the question is whether the religious establishment will permit changes even in matters affecting women which are not directly within their jurisdiction. Since the establishment of the State, Israeli women have been prevented from achieving equal rights by political concession made to the religious parties. Most governments have depended on the religious governments, and each government in turn has traded women's rights in exchange for political support. In 1951 an Equal Rights Law was passed. But the law at the same time gave the rabbinical courts jurisdiction over all matters concerning personal status. So

the most fundamental matters concerning personal life, including marriage and divorce, were put in the hands of courts where women are not even able to appear as witnesses.

In 1974 another attempt was made to change the law. The Law of Equality of Man and Citizen ostensibly gave women equal rights but then cancelled itself out by saying that nothing in it changed existing law. In the last Knesset, MKs Shulamit Aloni and Akiva Nof introduced an Equal Rights Bill for women. It would have made a significant change as it would have given women access to the High Court to ensure its enforcement. The Bill passed its first reading and then went to the Knesset's Law Committee. Premier Rabin then reportedly promised the religious parties that it would not be passed and it was buried.

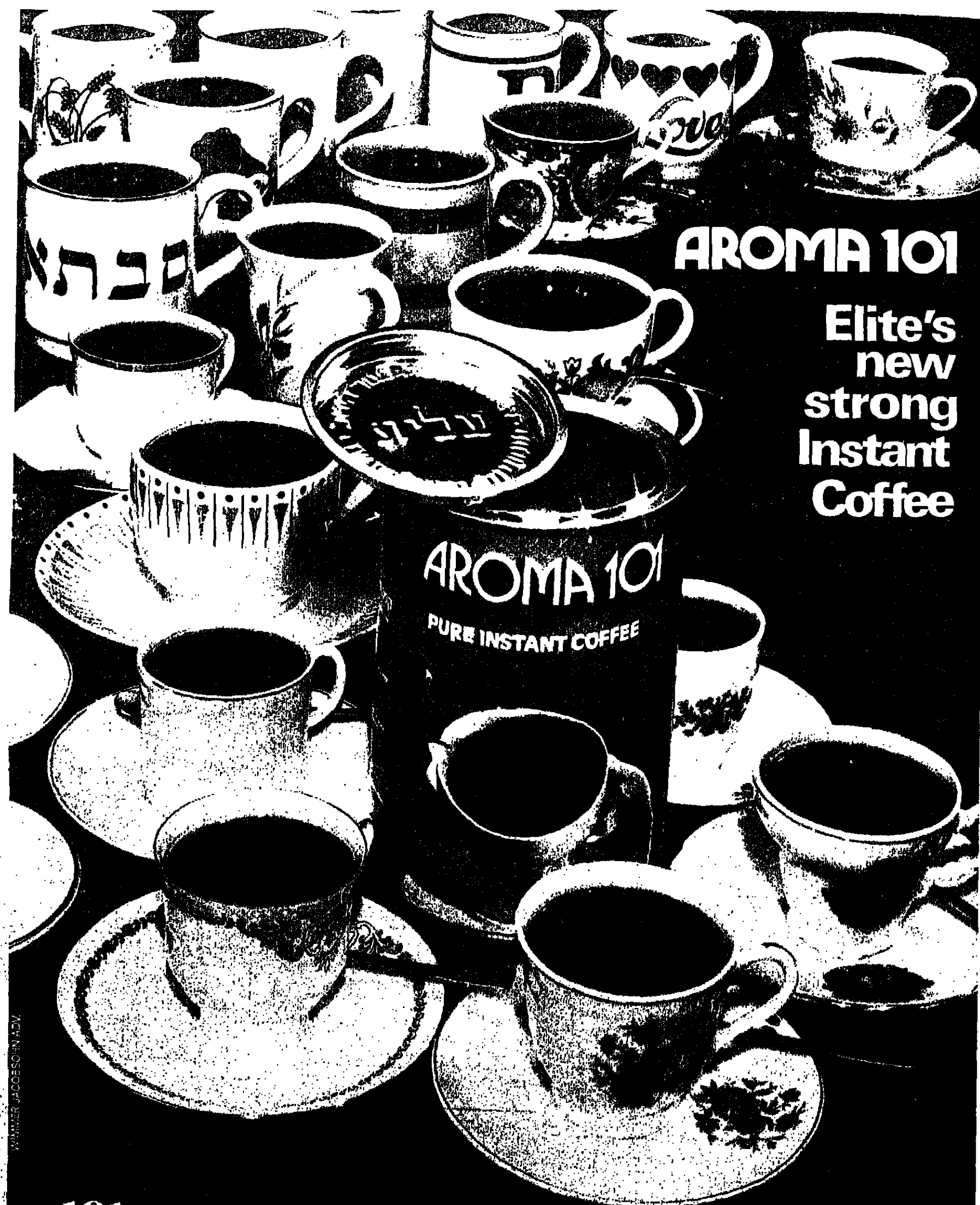
The present government passed, under the pressure of the religious parties, two laws which are major set-backs for women's rights. Agudat Yisrael made their entry into the coalition conditional on revoking the liberalized abortion bill and on allowing girls who declared they were religious to be exempted from army service. The government has refused to give exact figures of the number of girls released from army service on religious grounds under the new national service law. Deputy Defence Minister Mordecai Zippori suggested that the figure was around 27 per cent. Before the law was changed it was 18.5 per cent. Women members of the "Equal Service" protest movement have spent time in prison to demonstrate their opposition to the new law.

The abortion law had been liberalized under the previous Labour government in recognition of the fact that at least 100,000 abortions were taking place annually and that the change would primarily help those women who suffered economic or family difficulties. Section five, the "social clause," as it came to be known, was removed last year at the insistence of the religious parties. Today the expensive private market in abortions is flourishing, and only those women who must need abortions, the poor and uneducated, and those with large families, have trouble getting abortions.

The Ministry of Health refuses to release statistics on the number of abortions being performed legally since section five was removed, although Health Minister Shostak had no hesitation revealing figures when he wanted section five repealed. There are two possible explanations for this silence. Perhaps hospitals have been sealed completely to women needing abortions on social grounds. Or perhaps the number of abortions has not dropped since section five was repealed, and has even risen because doctors cannot refuse a pressing social need.

The situation probably has returned to what it was before the liberalization, when the law was a legalized wholesale because it was unrealistic and unenforceable. The Health Ministry might not want the figures revealed because they

(Continued on page 5)



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(Continued from page 3)
would infuriate their religious coalition partners.

SIGNIFICANTLY, THE only sub-committee of the Prime Minister's Committee which broke up without making recommendations was the one on religious matters. The conflict between the rabbis and some women on the fundamental issues was too great. But there are also differences amongst women on how to deal with the power of the religious establishment over women. Some women, like Dr. Libay, believe that if women are strong economically and politically, this will have an impact on the rabbinical courts, and will eventually affect such laws as those relating to marriage and divorce.

But others believe that economic and political power are not enough. "The women *halutzot* (pioneers) had economic independence, but there was still the traditional division of roles. Nor will the separation of state from religion bring equality, because in countries like the U.S. there is this separation and women do have economic power, yet they are still fighting for equality," said Tehya Bat-Oren, artist and author of the Hebrew feminist book "Whither the liberation of women?"

She believes that the core of discrimination is in myths, prejudice and religion which are so ingrained that they are prevalent even in non-religious societies. The only remedy is to change religious attitudes. But this will not happen because "one of the most fundamental aspects of religions, Jewish, Christian, Moslem, is that women are subordinate to men. Because of the belief that women are men's possessions, the most important fights the religious parties wage are over women's issues. They are fighting to keep their control over women. The abortion law was to deny women independence over their bodies and keep them at home having children, and the conscription law was intended to keep girls secluded at home and stop them from opening their eyes," said Bat-Oren.

IT IS WIDELY accepted that sexual stereotypes and the traditional division of roles is inculcated at the earliest age. Bat-Oren therefore believes that there can be no hope of equality unless there are basic changes in the substance of education. But she cannot see this happening under the present system. The Minister of Education Zevulun Hammer of the NRP has repeatedly stated his attitude that "a woman's honour is in her home" and "a woman has to be under the supervision of her husband or father."

All the women interviewed here share this belief in the need for a fundamental reassessment of the traditional role of women. Society must recognize, among other things, that children are not the sole responsibility of the mother. Work schedules should be reorganized and flexible hours introduced so fathers can share responsibility for children. Otherwise, even if women get equal pay and equal advance-

ment, they will still have the full responsibility for the children and the home — the same as another full time job.

Not that women in Israel are anywhere near getting equal pay. There has been an equal pay law since 1964. But according to the PM's Report women get an average of 60 per cent of the pay of men on an overall basis, and 80 per cent if it is calculated by the hour.

The fundamental reason for this is "the conception and prejudice which is still the rule in Israeli society. It is still accepted that the man works for the family's income and not the woman. Therefore, the commitment of the employer, the government, the Histadrut, everyone without exception, is much stronger to men than women. They feel that their consciences are clear if they pay women 40 per cent less than what men get," said Aliza Tamir, who is a member of the Executive Committee of the Histadrut and chairwoman of the women workers' section of the Labour Federation's trade union department.

This is so instilled in people's attitudes that the Histadrut will not support women in going to court for equal pay because it would mean that it would be going against the discriminatory wage agreements which it itself signed. Since 1977, it is illegal to have different wage scales. So instead the work is defined differently and women get the lower scale.

Women are not active in the trade unions. They are very poorly represented on works committees. Aliza Tamir is the only woman from the trade unions on the Executive Committee of the Histadrut. There are only two women in the executive committees of the 42 trade unions. Particularly revealing is that 50 per cent of the women on the workers' committees did not even know there was an equal pay law.

DURING THE 1970's there was a big increase in the number of Israeli women entering the work force and in 1979, 55 per cent of Jewish and Arab women were working. In the U.S., 80 per cent of women are working outside the home.

Zohar Carty, the Director of the Women's Bureau of the Ministry of Labour and Welfare, points out that Israeli women are usually concentrated in the traditional occupations. She said 44 per cent of women work in the civil service. Only eight per cent are in the scientific and academic professions, and only one per cent are in managerial positions. The number of women in industry has even declined from 19 per cent to 15 per cent over the last decade.

Secondly, women are concentrated at the lowest and middle levels of their professions. Third, they do not advance proportionately to men. The PM's Report pointed out that in the five highest levels of government service, women were only 17 per cent, and in the highest levels, only four per cent. There were no women directors-general and only one deputy director-general, in the Ministry of the Interior. This in spite of the fact that over 40 per cent of workers in government



Ora Namir



Ora Ahimeir



Nava Arad



Aliza Tamir; (Below) Tehya Bat-Oren



service were women. Although there are two women Supreme Court justices, only eight per cent of all judges are women.

Many more Israeli women are going to work, but the real revolution has been in that most of the women who entered the labour force have children, so that almost 50 per cent of women with children under the age of 13 are working mothers.

All these factors explain why women are being particularly badly hit by the economic recession. Fighting inflation by firing people has principally affected women because they are highly concentrated in the services, the main target. Furthermore, many women have not been able to undertake anything but part-time work because they have to be there when the children come home from school. Under present conditions, there is much less part-time work available and since the long school day has not been implemented women cannot accept full-time work. Consequently many are stopping work altogether.

THOSE WHO do have jobs and have not been fired, have to pay for day-care centres and kindergartens. The cost of these has risen astronomically and in the coming year it will cost at least IL\$5,000 per month to keep a child in a day-care centre. If this is to be paid out of the woman's wage, not even comparable to that of a man, then it is getting too expensive for her to keep working. Why bother?

These women do not even enter the statistics as unemployed, unless they actually re-register for work. Consequently, the national statistics on unemployment are misleading when it comes to women. Not only are more and more women dropping out of the work force, but at the same time fewer women are entering it. The latest figures for June this year showed that only a third of the people looking for work were women, whereas before the present economic difficulties, women made up 40 per cent of those looking for work, according to the Women's Employment Division of the Employment Service.

Aliza Tamir felt that the effects of this policy would be "catastrophic." She insisted that "there is no way to solve the problem of inflation without increasing production. And how can you expect increased production and economic development when 80 per cent of the potential workers of the population, the women, do not work because they do not have the conditions and the facilities. It is terribly damaging to the economy if women do not participate in the work force."

THERE MAY not be any work available in the services, but there are still plenty of vacancies in industry, the technical trades and computer work. Nava Arad, general-secretary of Nasmat (Working Mothers), pointed out that on the one hand the government was talking about getting workers out of the services and into industry to stimulate production, but on the other hand, the biggest reservoir of manpower, women, was being wasted, particularly since the government had no

real plans for vocational training of women. Nor were there plans to provide badly needed child care facilities near industrial centres. Instead she feared that there would be greater unemployment amongst women and that more and more women would have no alternative but to stay home to mind the children.

The expense and the serious shortage of day-care facilities for children have very significant implications in the sphere of education as well as employment. The Prime Minister's Report recommended that free and compulsory education be extended to children between the ages of three and five, because it recognized that a good education at this age was crucial to further development, and to the closing of both the social gap and the gap between men and women.

"We know that 42 per cent of the children who are at this elementary level come from underprivileged homes. If they do not get strong foundations, there is little hope of their continuing their education. We were told that there was no money, and instead the Education Ministry made high school education free," said Ora Namir, who is now head of the Knesset's education committee. By high school it is a bit late to treat the problem, and 80 per cent of girls who are not conscripted into the army because of low educational levels are from families of Asian and African origin.

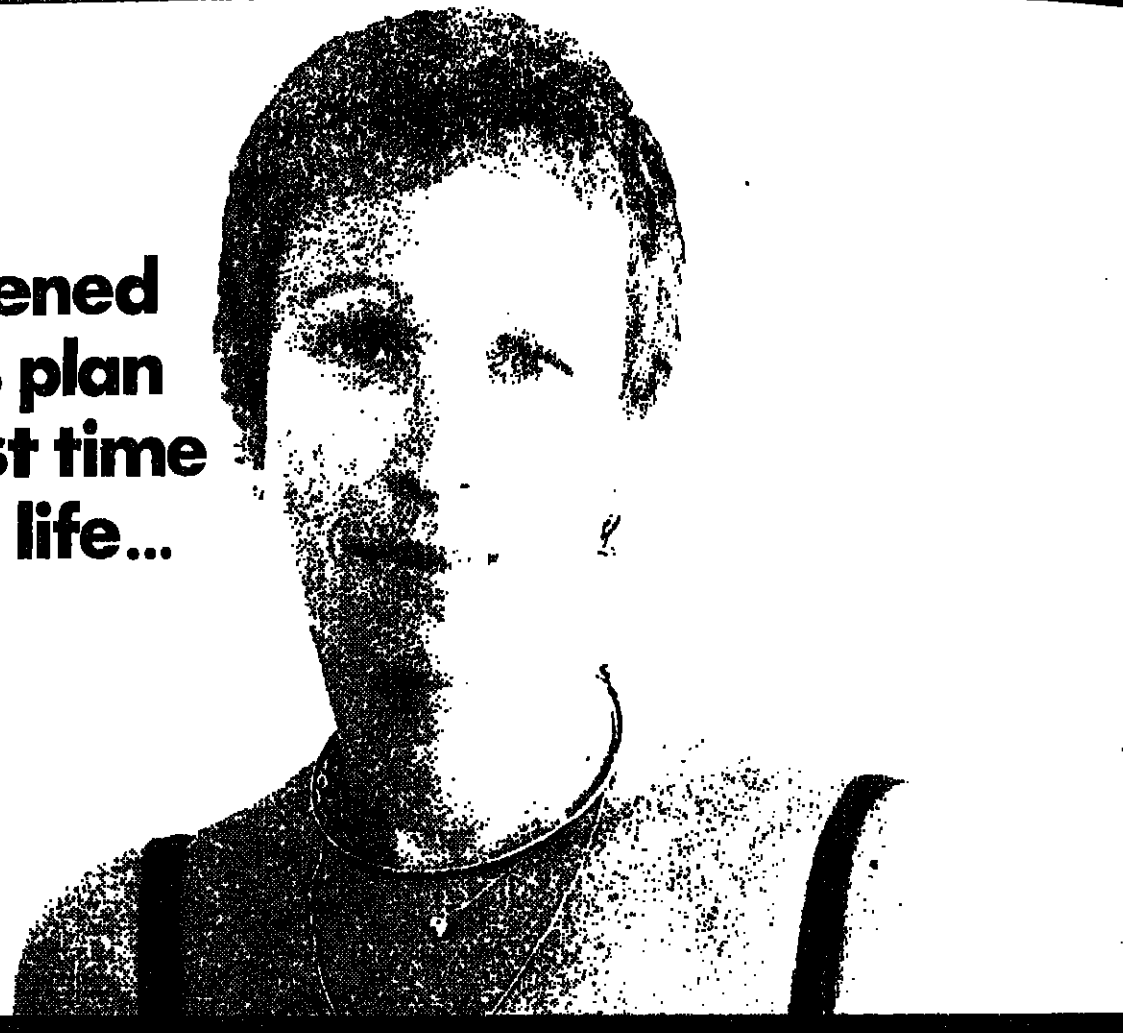
The Labour Party recently established a committee on the status of women and Nava Arad was named head of this committee. There is even talk that Labour may establish a separate ministry on women if it returns to power. But there is still no commitment from the Labour party to adopt the Prime Minister's Committee Report and make it part of their platform, even though the committee was initially sponsored by the Labour Party.

ON ABORTION, Arad said, "I am sure that when the Labour party gets back the social clause will be restored. And I will recommend that every girl do service either in the army or in national service."

But if Labour makes its traditional coalition with the National Religious Party, it is doubtful that much will be done to alter the status of women. Certainly, little will be done unless there is pressure from the women themselves, but so far Israeli women have been remarkably apathetic. Although some groups have organized themselves to establish rape centres and shelters for some of Israel's 50,000 battered women, this grass roots action has mainly been carried out by feminist groups. The bulk of Israeli women are becoming more aware of the problem but are still not actively involved to improve the situation.

Israeli women, like the men, worry primarily over the political and security problems of the state and economic hardship. Women continue to put their own problems low on the scale of national and personal priorities.

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GOLDA MEIR'S achievement in becoming prime minister was a case of the exception proving the rule: few women have ever reached the top rungs of the political ladder in this country. Even at the lower rungs, women are blatantly under-represented, although they account for half the electorate.

Formal equality between the sexes does not spill over into the political sources of power. Laws may confer equal status on various sections of the population, but social attitudes cannot be legislated especially in a society which is still largely composed of communities where the masculine ideal prevails of women assigned as a matter of course to their traditional task of motherhood and wifehood.

One often hears nostalgic references to "the good old days" of the founding generation of pioneers, which, according to the late Beba Idelson, Golda's lifelong friend and founder of the Histadrut working women's organization, were not all that good. Indeed that tough lady politician pointed out in a 1973 interview that "it was all a myth that things have changed for women." She recalled how bitterly disappointed these women revolutionaries were to find that on joining the first collective settlements at Degania and Kinneret they were immediately put to work in the kitchen and the laundry. Their male comrades quickly reverted to traditional patterns, despite lip-service to the contrary.

This was especially so as far as political representation was concerned, she pointed out. It was because women could not get their fair share of the power that they formed Moetzet Hapoelet the working women's council (today Na'amati).

More women reached the higher rungs through the Labour Movement than through the General Zionist, Revisionist or Mizrahi movements.

When women achieved power they often meted out baleful treatment of members of their own sex. Thus Beba Idelson never let younger women reach the helm in her organization until she was obliged to retire. Golda managed to block the path of a brilliant woman like Senta Josephthal and removed Shulamit Aloni from the Knesset list, because both women had had the temerity to stand up to her.

ONE OF THE most prominent women politicians today is Knesset Education Committee Chairman Ora Namir (Labour). She speaks of a decline in women's political representation. There are no women in the Cabinet and only nine (five of them Labour Alignment) in the Ninth Knesset, which, she pointed out, was the lowest number in all the Knessets so far. In the past as today Labour had led the way, but even in her party's case there had been regression, largely because fewer kibbutz women were entering politics. Worst of all was the situation in local government, where there were very few women on city councils although municipal services is a natural area of activity, Namir

The power paradox

Mark Segal discusses the role of women in politics.



Voting — mostly for men. (Below) Sarah Stern-Katan, Hanna Zemer. (Millman, IFFA)



observes.

At a time when women were advancing in a number of professions, such as medicine and the law — half of the state attorneys are women with a rising number of women judges — there was a decline in politics, Namir observes. Even in kibbutz, those most egalitarian of communities, there were ever fewer women in key positions. Were fewer women ready, she wondered, to make the personal sacrifice required in the punishing life of a politician? Mrs. Namir thought that women were less inclined to enter public life nowadays partly as a result of the cumulative influence of wars on Israeli society, with the ensuing iron resolve to consolidate the family ocell in the face of constant upheaval.

SHE CERTAINLY concurred with the witty comment of "Davar" editor and TV personality Hanna Zemer that the main problem of women politicians was that they have no wives to lean on at home. Mrs. Zemer, a long-time observer of our political life, recalled a luncheon given by Golda for women diplomats. There were three women ambassadors serving here at the time and a number of senior

women diplomats. Apart from the Philippine Ambassador (whose doctor husband worked in Manila), all the rest were either divorced, or separated.

"I later told Golda that these women proved what an intolerable personal price one had to pay to get to the top," Zemer recalled. It was difficult for women to pursue a full-time career, unless they were willing to sacrifice so much else. "The dilemma of modern women, in Israel and elsewhere, is that they want to be equal without losing their special position as women," she said.

As an observer of many years' standing of the political scene, Zemer conceded that women politicians were treated on the basis of merit, "and were often even less pleasant than women colleagues than was customary among their male counterparts. She thought women stayed out of politics because of the gruelling pace. Also, "Women on the whole are not endowed with the killer instinct required for those who climb to the top," Zemer pointed out.

Mrs. Namir also pointed to greater vulnerability of women politicians, as well as higher expectations of their performance. "We are judged by our private lives, and by our external

appearance, something to which men are not subject," she declared.

DO WOMEN vote differently to men? Modi'in Ezraochi applied research centre director Amiram Yarkoni reported that there was on the whole little substantive difference between men and women as far as political views were concerned. His senior assistant, Dr. Sara Shemer said there was occasionally greater emphasis by women respondents on social issues. However, in the political sphere women were usually more inclined to the mainstream.

She remembered having been surprised when one poll revealed that contrary to a commonly-held assumption, Ezer Weizman was not more popular among women.

MRS. NAMIR believes that there has been a regression in women's rights in recent years, for which she blames the Likud's conservative social-economic policies and its concessions to the Agudat Yisrael.

"Aguda is today the most powerful Knesset faction because of its pivotal status in the coalition. Rabbi Porush, one of the most reactionary MKs as far as women's rights are concerned, has been given the chairmanship of the Social Betterment and Labour committee, a key address for all legislation affecting women, and the NRP has become a camp-follower," she charged, adding: "Who is the victim of the tilt to bigotry? — Women, of course. What happened in Netivot was symptomatic, where the Aguda-backed yeshiva has managed to impose shetl morality on the Negev township. I heard of how yeshiva boys scream 'whores' at women wearing light summer dresses in the Negev heat."

Mrs. Namir pointed out to the regression in Bnei-Akiva, the NRP youth movement, where there has been a growing trend to separate the sexes and retreat from co-education.

THE NRP'S sole woman MK, Mrs. Sara Stern-Katan thinks quite differently on the subject. She justified such a trend as a reaction to permissiveness in the general community. Stern in nature as in name, she declared with an admonishing finger: "We sin against our people by according too much freedom to the individual and by so doing we sacrifice the hallowed values of our tradition."

A fighting supporter of Gush Emunim, Mrs. Stern-Katan feels so strongly that the media and especially Israel TV were hostile to non-left-wingers that she would have TV closed down. A member of Kvutza Yavne, she regards herself as standing in the breach against libertarian notions which could undermine the Jewish people.

She personally endeavours to get home each night to be with her husband and her kibbutz community. Mrs. Stern-Katan acknowledges that women in politics bear a much greater burden than their male colleagues because of the extra responsibilities they have to shoulder.

Mrs. Namir, who was chairman of the Prime Minister's commission on the status of women in the Rabin government, believed that the Feminist movement had failed to have any impact in Israel, partly because of instinctive male antagonism, and partly because many women rejected its stridency and some of its premises. "They regarded it as an imported product, not part of the local scene," she said, noting that in concrete political terms it only appealed to a thin layer of upper-income women.

The two women MKs were on opposing sides of the barricades when it came to the two issues around which women's rights had focused during the Ninth Knesset: conscription of women and the amendment of the abortion law. The nine women MKs had parted ways on political and ideological grounds, obviating the formation of a women MKs' lobby, as Mrs. Namir explained. On the abortion issue, poorer women had been the victims, because those with means could anyway pay for it. Mrs. Namir argued, while the NRP's retreat from the Hapoel Hamizrachi's ideology of equal duties and obligations for men and women had been symbolised in its co-tailing Aguda on the conscription bill.

ON THE LATTER issue, the women MKs split along coalition-opposition lines, while on the abortion law Sara Doron of the Liberals was at first ready to vote against but under great pressure agreed to abstain.

Stern-Katan claimed that her party had a clear conscience on conscription, after having voted with the coalition for the Aguda motion, because it had recently adopted a resolution urging national service for all girls for a two-year period. Girls could go in the army if they so wished, she pointed out, highlighting unwittingly Mrs. Namir's point that so doing they were backtracking on the equality of duties and rights of men and women.

In both parties the women's organizations were now busy ensuring that they get a bigger chunk of the Knesset list when the coming parliamentary candidates' distribution comes to be settled. Mrs. Namir related that Labour's women's division will insist that its candidates get every fifth place on the list after their bad experience in 1977. Then women were spaced lower down the list and thus never made it in the depleted Labour Knesset faction.

In the much smaller NRP, the women's organization has formed a faction which won almost 10 per cent in the last party elections. They took this measure because of their under-representation.

I fear that I made her uncomfortable by reminding her of how her faction had issued an official censure of the party leadership for having submitted to the Aguda veto in the 1978 local government election, excluding all women candidates from the joint Aguda-NRP municipal lists.

Thus no religious women had been able to take part in the important work of local government.

IS THE Israeli woman "a pale and fragile china doll held together by strings" as the marionette in Dalla Rabikovich's poem of that name indicates? Did Israel, because of its military needs, its pioneer ethic, its patriarchal roots, polarize sex roles inculcating machismo values in men and passivity in women?

On the surface, the experience of everyday Israeli life does not give one the impression that the Israeli woman is a Victorian lady or a shrinking violet. She seems better represented by the vigorous heroines of Yehudit Hendel's novels than the fragile marionette who says, "the woman's not responsible for her actions/say the judges." Nevertheless, at a deeper level, the writing of Israeli women seems to reveal intense sexual vulnerability. It suggests itself in the poetry of Israeli women from the pioneer poet Rachel to third aliya's Leah Goldberg to today's Dalla Rabikovich, Yona Wallach and Zeida.

A woman in her sixties, of traditional sensibility, Zeida Mishkovsky feels that one can inevitably discern the feminine sensibility in women's writing. "Every creator puts his own person into the objects he creates," says the gentle Zeida. In long skirt and blouse, her hair is covered by a "shetl," the wig of Orthodox women, which she has been heard to call jokingly her "armour."

In her simply furnished apartment off the Shaarei Chesed neighbourhood of Jerusalem, she fingers the fine work of a silver filigreed plate and exclaims, "Someone's happiness, someone's sorrow is expressed here. Every work has a philosophy of life to it," she points to the old wood cabinet, and traces the bright shapes on an orange tablecloth. In every detail there's a hint of someone's experience. Certainly in poetry this is more explicit. Pointing to the uniquely feminine character of women's poetry she asserts, "Even in the children's poetry of Miriam Shteiklis there are love songs."

"YET THE concept of woman is a broad one," says Zeida. "There is not just one type of womanly characteristic. Just look at the Bible. There are many different types of women. But each is uniquely a woman. There's the beloved in the Shulamit of the Song of Songs and there's Rivka who shrewdly organizes the happenings of her household. And yet again, there's Michal, so modernistic. What a proud woman she is," says Zeida animatedly drawing the panorama of Biblical women into her living room past the Sabbath candlesticks and bookcases of Talmudic tomes that had belonged to her late husband.

"I don't like Avigail," she declares. "I don't like how she spoke of her husband. But then there's Ruth." Zeida's face softens. "She is the epitome of faithfulness. Ruth can be compared to Antigone while Orpah is Ismene," she said.

Referring to other literatures Zeida quickly dispels the view that she is a "rebbitsen" ignorant of worldly knowledge. "Ruth is special," she con-

Different kinds of beauty

Three writers and a critic talk to Rochelle Furstenberg about women in Israeli literature.



Professor Ruth Kartun-Blum, poet Zeida Mishkovsky and novelist Amalia Cahana-Carmon.



(Harris, Morris)

tinues, "she radiates womanly love, loyalty, steadfastness. She is the stranger from whom springs the root of the Messiah. Yet Delilah is also a stranger. She's very feminine and yet so different. She is seen as the embodiment of female guile. She has a different kind of beauty. A strong beauty. Who can say which is more feminine? All the feminine possibilities are there in the Bible."

"Men grapple with different things," she asserts, "and this is reflected in the literature. They are more involved in war, work, while women, for better or for worse, are involved in love and family."

"Is this true even today when women have careers?"

"I think so," she says quietly. "Look at Leah Goldberg. Although she had a very active career and was a well-known literary scholar, that which was really important, that which she wrote about in her poems, was the personal, feminine side of things."

"And what about yourself?" I ask timidly.

"It plays a part," she smiles. "I never had aspirations for a career, even though I worked as a teacher. I never saw it as a 'career.' Rather, it was a matter of developing personal relationships with my students."

IN CONSONANCE with her views, much of Zeida's poetry reveals an almost archetypically female vision of life. The fear of being overwhelmed, of annihilation into nothingness, is expressed in the poem, "In Childhood, New Fruit." The equally feminine sense of vulnerability, the fear of a sudden intrusion of evil into the protected domain of one's home, is evident in much of the book, "Behold the Mountain, Behold the Fire." "For what is my home and what is my life? On the day of catastrophe. It is with this vulnerability in mind that she addresses the bride and groom who appear on her street to wake her from a deathlike numbness. "And I saw that they weave a hope which is extremely fragile. And I saw that they weave a true hope. And so I secretly begged Creator of man/May devils not play havoc with their imagina-

tion. May their home be a home forever."

The home, the relationship between man and wife, the love that develops there is the ultimate value. "The dialogue between two people, that is one of the most important things in life," says Zeida.

THIS DIALOGUE between man and woman also plays a primary role in the modernistic fiction of Amalia Cahana-Carmon. It is intrinsic to the structure of all her writing. But in contrast to the traditional Zeida, the dialogue for Amalia Cahana-Carmon represents a fleeting moment of contact between two people which inevitably leads to disappointment. The relationship fails to fulfill expectations. What for Zeida is a vague anxiety that rupture will come between bride and groom, is built into the nature of things in Cahana-Carmon's vision.

THE WARM, forthright writer with the deep-set eyes who spends her time between England and Israel, impresses one as very different than the estranged, introspective heroine of her stories in "Under One Roof" (1971) and "Magnetic Fields" (1977) and her novel, "And Moon in the Valley of Ayalon."

Reflecting the existential condition of life, there is a common structure in all her works which portrays an alienated hero or heroine catapulted out of a death-in-life existence by an outsider who recognizes the specialness, the mystery, of the other. Breaking through the walls of human limitation and the loneliness of the self, the couple achieves divine fusion, a moment of revelation when the submerged order of things become clear. But the moment of vision and intensity must pass. An exclusive, ever-renewing relationship cannot but fail and the protagonist must return to a lonely existence in the mundane world. He returns nevertheless, with greater insight which dictates further life choices.

In contrast to Zeida's traditional pattern of thinking which sees an intrusion from the outside as potential evil, Cahana-Carmon, in the more

contemporary spirit sees it as intensifying life.

HAVING BEEN in the Palmach during the War of Independence, Amalia Cahana-Carmon began writing in the fifties. The gap between dream and reality in her stories has been seen as a reflection of the Israeli dream of a better society which, in reality, has fallen short of the ideal. She points out that this gap between the dream and reality of the State coincides with the personal dreams of youth and the inevitable disappointment that comes with maturity.

She emphasizes nevertheless, that she doesn't write about the national experience. It enters naturally into the background and pattern of thinking of the work. In the same way, she doesn't write about the feminine experience, but as all other conditions of her life it determines her point of view.

"That I'm a woman and have three children determines my point of view," she says. Insisting, as Zeida does, that there is a difference between the writing of men and women Amalia Cahana-Carmon nevertheless feels that one cannot trace how the conditions of a woman's life determine her point of view without reducing the creative process into a simplistic mechanism.

Fearing that the creative process, that writing would submerge her, not allow her to live, she ran away from writing for many years and then began to write almost in spite of herself. On a visit to Israel from England where her husband was studying she found, while helping her mother clean for Pesach, a pack of letters written during her Palmach days. Realizing that together they made up a story, she sat down to write "Beer Sheva, Capital of the Negev." It was a transforming experience, a moment of revelation and as she admits, she has continued to "write and write and write."

She concedes that it was difficult to move between family and writing, the needs of the children, and the demands of work. Perhaps, had she not been married she would have written 13 books instead of three. Yet far from regretting

the time spent raising her family, Amalia Cahana-Carmon sees it as the "elemental," the basic experience, the life-force to which all her protagonists aspire.

IN CONTRAST to the previous writers Shulamit Hareven challenges the view that there is anything characteristically feminine in women's writing. At an interview in her tastefully furnished apartment in Jerusalem, this strong-minded writer discussed her aesthetic creed and view of women in literature.

"There's no one Israeli woman which the writer portrays. Rather, one writes about many different women. Therefore one can't make any broad generalizations or come to any sociological conclusions about Israeli women from its literature," she insists. Nor, she makes it clear, should one make any inferences regarding the author from the characters of a book. In her opinion, there's no connection between the life or personal biography of the writer and the work.

This is borne out by Shulamit Hareven's novel, "The City of Many Days," about Jerusalem in the Mandate period. Sara, the heroine of the book is a young Sephardic woman born during Turkish rule in Palestine while Shulamit Hareven, on the other hand, came as a child from Warsaw in 1940. The circumstances and complex of experiences cannot be compared between the author and the heroine of her work.

"My perception of the writer, is the medieval one," explains Shulamit Hareven. "The writer must be a 'meister' or master craftsman who excels in all aspects of his craft. This has little to do with the life and personality of the craftsman. If my subject is the use of words then I should be able to use words in every way."

HER OWN WORK consistent with the view of the writer as craftsman, consists not only of writing fiction but of other writing forms as well. Just as a good carpenter would not only build chairs but would also know how to make tables and doors, the writer must be able to work in all genres of writing

— fiction, poetry, journalism. "My favourite form is the short story," Shulamit Hareven admits. "I tend to be laconic. The short story answers this. It is a crystal form, a prism for a lot of things." Having published many books of short stories and a novel, she has also written poetry and frequently writes journalistic essays for the newspaper, "Ma'ariv."

Active in the Peace Now movement she has recently tried her hand at political writing with much success. She sees her "publicist writing" as her responsibility as a citizen of Israel.

Consistent with her aesthetic creed, Shulamit Hareven does not feel that one must be a woman to write well about women. It doesn't matter whether the writer is male or female. It depends how gifted the writer is.

IN ISRAEL today many critics feel that the best writer about women is the male writer Amos Oz. His depiction of Chana Gonen in "My Michael" has been surpassed by few Israelis, male or female. In Oz's writing the woman often symbolizes the emotional underground, the sensuousness, and violence seething underneath the "straight" Israeli society, the pragmatic male world.

Other writers too, seem to identify the artist with the woman, particularly the older idiosyncratic woman. As the "feeling centre," the "impractical outsider" she is like the artist who stands over and against conventional society. We see this in David Schachar's depiction of the narrator's eccentric mother in "His Majesty's Agent." She disdains the practical banking world of her husband and lives in her own fantasies. In Orpaz "Tomoshenna Tales" the boy-narrator also identifies with his eccentric mother waiting for the salvation of love.

At the same time, even in these very writers, there is a strange ambivalence toward women as sexual partners. Schachar, can, at times, treat them as sex objects, while Orpaz seems to be threatened by them, as man-eating. There is a strong male tone in Ben-Ner, while other writers like Yizhar and Yehoshua have hardly dealt with women at all.

As far as women writers are concerned, they portray a variety of different types of Israeli women. Whether they believe as Zeida and Amalia Cahana-Carmon that they are expressing their feminine sensibility in writing or whether, as Shulamit Hareven, they believe there is no such thing, few seem to be setting out to write about women's problems and issues as American women are doing.

TO CONCLUDE, I discussed this with Ruth Kartun-Blum, the attractive, quick-minded professor of Hebrew Literature at the Hebrew University. Declaring her belief that the feminine in literature is not a "literary concern" she discussed the sociological atmosphere necessary for feminist literature. "In the past decades in the U.S., the genre of feminist literature has

(Continued on page 19)

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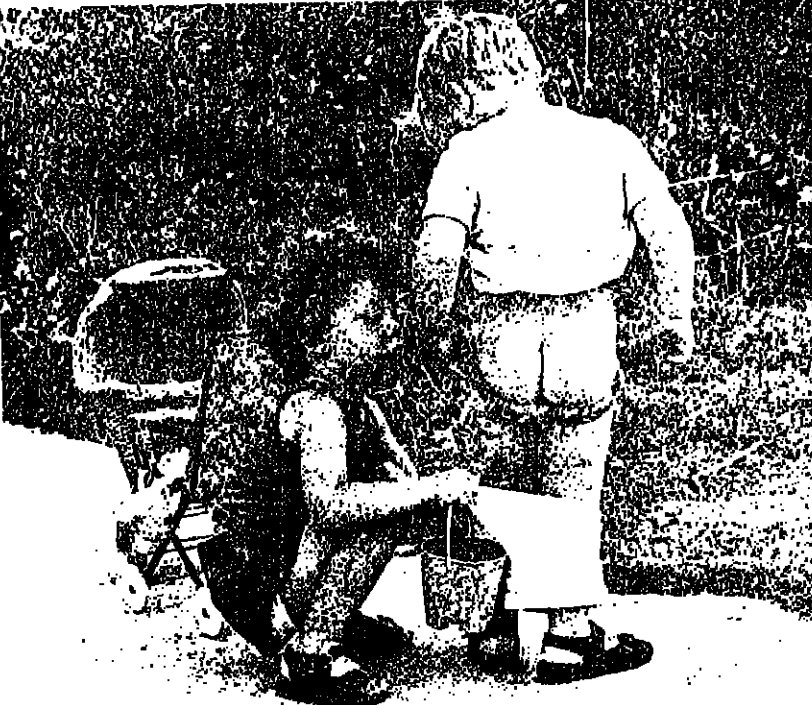
What are little girls made for?

Do so-called 'feminine pursuits' come naturally? Or are they a result of conditioning by the kind of activities that Aliza Auerbach has caught with her camera on these pages and on the cover?



PAGE TEN

THE JERUSALEM POST — WOMEN OF ISRAEL



WEDAY, JULY 30, 1980

THE JERUSALEM POST — WOMEN OF ISRAEL

PAGE ELEVEN

What are little girls made for?

IF WOMEN are so smart, how come they aren't rich? Why can't more women achieve top executive positions or break into the business world? This is how men often respond to women's claims of equality.

Women who have reached the top by climbing through corporate ranks are quite rare. The fortunate few who do manage to break down the resistance of corporate policy, often find themselves facing the wall of social disapproval and mores which place the entire onus of home and family life on the woman's shoulders.

For the most part, Israeli women who have reached significant positions in business come from families with above-average income. (This includes a husband's salary, which enables the woman to pursue her vocation.) Others have taken over the family business or joined their husbands in running theirs.

Most of those I have spoken to rely heavily on live-in or daily help, and confirm that they would not have reached their position without the cooperation of an extremely "understanding" and "supportive" husband, implying that for a woman, going into business is considered, even in her own family, as a weird trait which must be "understood."

Notwithstanding the help of their husbands, these women are still fully responsible for running their homes and bringing up their children, in addition to their hectic, long-houred and high-pressure career tasks.

The progress of career-oriented women who are also mothers is stunted by the lack of sufficient day-care-centres and by the short school-day, which force them to be home during the day, effectively obstructing them from succeeding in a career. As one businesswoman said, "who is going to even consider employing a woman, no matter how talented and qualified, who can only work until 1 p.m.?"

The chances for women in Israel to progress beyond jobs which merely pay for the daily help or the "metapelet" (children's nurse) are not likely to improve without a basic change in the conception of our social structure on the one hand, and of corporate structure on the other hand.

The prevalent notion that women aren't successful in the workplace because of their upbringing or nature has a hidden "blame-the-victim" message, according to a female professor of sociology and organization and management: "It's not that we don't know how to play on teams," she says. "It's just very hard to play on a team that doesn't want you on it."

ONE OF the few women who have made it to the top is Mirella Benzimra, Israel head of Manufacturers' Life Insurance Company of Canada.

Benzimra, who immigrated to Israel from Italy, joined Manufacturers' Life following an advertisement in *The Jerusalem Post* headed "Are You the Man?"

The advertisement, she recalls, called for a young man with a knowledge of languages. Training would be given on the

(Continued on page 13)

Where the money is

Michal Yudelman interviews three women who have made it in the world of business



Mirella Benzimra — "Are you the man?"



Tamara Tolman — a very obstinate person.

(Stopnitsky)

The fight to get to the top

PERHAPS THE best insight of all into the inner-workings of the Israeli corporate structure as it affects women is given by Tova Yeshaya, Director of Advertising and Public Relations of the Eitz Hazayit Company.

Yeshaya climbed the rungs at Eitz Hazayit, all the time fighting prejudices and opposition, both at home, where her husband wanted a "nice little housewife" and at work, where her meteoric ascent was not too graciously received.

Yeshaya's career began over a decade ago, when she, her husband and two children went to Uganda on a two-year government mission. There she met different people from all over the world and began studying advertising and public relations by correspondence.

Upon their return, Yeshaya took a Technion course in marketing and management, while working as Shekem and Supersol sales manager for Eitz Hazayit. Today, apart from her success as Eitz Hazayit's head of advertising and public relations, Yeshaya is also the only woman on two professional bodies: the Israel Advertisers Association's Board of Directors, and on the executive committee of the Israel Public Relations Association. She lectures in three different communications courses and also has an active social life. As a member of the Board



Tova Yeshaya

of the Advertisers Association she spearheaded a successful campaign to compel newspapers to disclose circulation figures.

Today, her children are grown up — her son is 18 and her daughter is 25 — so she is free to pursue her work and interests. Things were more difficult before her divorce, five years ago. "Marriage is stifling, if you want a career. Had I not been married, I would have forged ahead in my profession many years ago, instead of having to wait for my children to grow up. Today I am against marriage, I think it's an outdated institution."

FROM HER vantage point as an executive in a Histadrut-owned corporation, Yeshaya deprecates the grave discrimination against women in Israeli organizations. "The women

have the service-related jobs — secretaries, typists, telephonists, nurses — while the men are the bosses, doctors, etc. Where are the women ministers? Where are the women managing-directors and section heads?" she asks.

Studies have proved, she continues, that women are more loyal, diligent and hard-working at their jobs than men. "Employers who complain that women are not career-oriented, or don't give their all to their job are themselves the culprits: If women receive boring, unsatisfying clerical jobs with no chances of progress and promotion, why should they even try?"

Yeshaya's way to the top has not been easy. She always has had to work harder than anyone else to prove she is only as good as any other man, and still does. "I used to work for hours on end, giving everything I could, proving over and over again that my job was the most important thing to me. I introduced advertisements which made our products soar to top selling rates. And yet, there have always been attempts to trip me up," she says.

She is now occupying a higher post than the one at which the corporation's male executives receive a company car but the company never gave her a car. The firm does not consider her the head of the family, although she is divorced and

has two children, and her salary suffers because of this.

But women are not the only ones who suffer in the Israeli corporate structure: the real victim is the floundering Israeli economy, for "Women are much better at certain executive jobs than a man could ever be. Take a managing director's job, for instance: you need sensitivity, intuition and understanding of human relations for this, and let's face it, those qualities are much more developed in women than in men."

"Yet given a choice between a male and female candidate of the same qualifications and background, the man will get the job. As a result the whole system suffers, for not getting the best person for the job. It's a pity that men's chauvinistic prejudices make it so difficult for them to take orders from a woman, or make it impossible for them to see that a pretty woman can be talented as well," she explains.

However, Yeshaya too sees a glimmer of hope: a new generation of more open-minded male executives is emerging, men who are open to change and are not blind to the female capabilities around them. This, coupled with determined, talented women, may pave the way for a new era in business.

MICHAEL YUDELMAN

WHEN REAL-CREAM-ICE-CREAM DIDN'T EXIST,
STRAUSS INVENTED IT FOR YOU.
32 YEARS AGO.

(Continued from page 13)

job, it said. She was a little puzzled when the male clerk asked her whether she could type and knew shorthand, until she realized that he assumed that she came for a secretarial job, also advertised by Manufacturers' Life at the time. When she showed him the advertisement in her hand, it was his turn to be surprised.

Benzimra got the job and began as an insurance underwriter. A few years later she became ill, and thought she would have to leave her job, which involved much running around and climbing up and down stairs. The company, which by then had learned to value her skills, offered her a position in choosing and training new agents. In 1986, she

became the Israel manager.

At the time of her appointment, Benzimra's IL83,000 annual salary made her the highest paid woman in Israel. Today, with a monthly salary of about IL100,000, plus a car and expenses, she believes she is but one of many women who have attained high positions in Israel. She admits, though, that in most of her dealings, the executives holding the powerful positions have been men.

Women suffer in the business world here, Benzimra said in her spacious office in the Shalom Tower in Tel Aviv, due to the mistaken assumption on their part and the part of their employer, that they are less suited than men to fill managerial posts.

She herself never had

problems, thanks to "a good technique" she has developed, which includes a businesslike approach, hard work and practicing whatever she preaches. Benzimra also enjoyed the experience of running a family business with her father in Italy, before coming to Israel.

"The person at the top is the one who sets the tone in the whole corporation. Management in itself is a dry, lonely job, involving difficult decisions, decisions which often hurt people. The art is to combine this with being a human being: then you can do a lot of good. If you preserve your humanity, you can lead the company, develop and improve the workers and give them opportunities for getting ahead," she explains.

IT IS ALL a matter of organization, says Benzimra. Working for long irregular hours, and travelling some 3,000 kilometres a month on business trips out of town, Benzimra's organization skills extend to her family, whom she has trained to be understanding and supportive of her career. Disorganization in your family will lead to disorganization on the job, she asserts.

"I trained my 'ezeret' to be punctual, because if she is late, then I must be late for work, where people depend on me and where there is a set schedule. I must say everyone has been wonderfully cooperative."

Benzimra's husband, a financial consultant, would have liked her to be at home more of the time, "and still grumbles about it, although he has grown used to it," she smiles.

PART OF THE art of organization, Benzimra believes, is arranging your family life in a way which does not hamper your career. Many women are not promoted because their employer knows that if there is trouble at home, they will be absent from work. "If you know you cannot be at work for eight hours, it's better to tell your employer and suggest doing the job in seven hours, than to take the job and then leave early all the time. If you're honest and work well, your employer will be pleased with your efficiency and happy to promote you when the time comes, because you have proved that you can do an eight hour job in less time, she says.

Admittedly, women have more obligations. No matter how time consuming or difficult your post may be, you are still the main bearer of family responsibilities. This, Benzimra concedes, is a major drawback.

Benzimra advises women in business not to be afraid of making managerial decisions: you may be wrong, but women are not the only ones who make wrong decisions. Be confident in your ability to decide.

The fear of many women to make important decisions is groundless. After all, many everyday decisions made at home, determining the education of your children, doing the right thing in a family crisis, caring for a tiny baby — include much more momentous decisions than the ones you make at work," she concludes.

TAMARA TOLMAN is founder and managing director of Danish Plus, a network of stores for kitchen and household wares. Tolman was one of the main buyers and store directors of Danish Interiors before she decided to open her own store in 1974. It never crossed her mind that she would encounter any difficulties.

She had established contacts in Europe from her many years of work with Danish Interiors, and she simply continued to buy from them for Danish Plus, which started out as a daughter company of the former. In this endeavour she was encouraged and supported by her husband, the director of Danish Interiors. "When I used to arrange the exhibit tables for Danish Interiors, people would come in

and want to buy the table with everything on it. They didn't seem to care how much the china and pottery cost. But I could not sell it, they were merely props," says Tolman.

This prompted her to take her first steps as an independent businesswoman. She thought it would not be a bad idea to open a place where the beautiful china and pottery and glassware she imported as props would be for sale.

It was difficult at first for Tolman to assert her authority, in Israel and abroad, because of her tiny stature and youthful appearance. "But I am a very obstinate person, and never hesitate to do what I have to do. Nobody has ever been able to stop me," she says.

THIS DOES NOT mean that things have been easy, for as a woman, she finds that she must work twice as hard at success, and be twice as good as anyone else to be accepted, in the business and social world.

"Even if you have an ideal husband," says Tolman, a mother of two children aged eight and six, "there are family worries you can never be rid of, and they take an emotional toll, often damaging your ability to function at work."

A woman in business, Tolman says, must be super-organized, fast and efficient. Even so, there are always conflicts of priorities.

"Every year, the major household exhibitions in Europe take place in September. This is also when the school year begins, and every year I am torn apart by the desire to be with my children at the beginning of school and the need to transact my main buying deals at those exhibitions."

Tolman admits that without the help and support of her family, she would never have succeeded in her career. "Your family must accept the fact that this is your job and adapt to it. At first my husband would say to me, 'shall I help you with your dishes?' I would say, do as you please. They're not my dishes. It's not my house. It's yours, it's ours. If your husband does not accept you as an equal, or sees you as a competitor, it is almost impossible to develop and get ahead." As a businesswoman, Tolman works irregular hours and relies heavily on her live-in maid.

LOOKING BACK over her career — since 1974 she has opened Danish Plus outlets in Ramat Gan, Haifa, Jerusalem, Beersheba, Kfar Shmaryahu and the chic Kikar Hamedita, in Tel Aviv — Tolman has no hesitation in naming the main obstacle to the career of Israeli women: The short school-day.

The short school-day either forces the woman to drop whatever she is doing and rush home in the middle of the day, or to trust the upbringing and education of her children to unqualified nannies. "In Israel, your whole life's work depends on your 'metapelet.' If she is sick, forget about going to work. A regular school day, lasting until 4 p.m. as it does throughout the Western world, would revolutionize the Israeli way of life, simply by giving her a choice."

Arms and the woman



(Rubinger)

Hirsh Goodman discusses some of the controversies surrounding the issue of women's service in the Israel Defence Forces. He finds a wide gap exists between image and reality.

FOR YEARS the picture of an Israeli woman soldier — clutching an Uzi sub-machinegun, untanned and smiling down from the travel posters — has been as representative of Israel's image as the kibbutz.

But, as with most travel posters, there is a sharp disparity between the image and the reality. Many women use religion as a pretext to evade service. And many of those who do enlist are unhappy with the roles allotted them.

Different aspects of the issue are under attack from almost every quarter.

The rabbis behind the ultra-Orthodox parties who wield tremendous power in the coalition have declared that women should choose martyrdom rather than submit to conscription.

To women ineligible for exemption on religious grounds, military service has become a symbol of injustice and inequality. Civil rights groups use the issue as evidence that the country is succumbing to creeping religious coercion.

It has also become a target for the Israeli feminists, who perceive the military as one of the major bastions of "male chauvinism."

The issue rocked the Knesset in over a dozen heated debates. National service for women will be one of the focal issues in the next elections, as it has been over the past three decades.

At the heart of the conflict are two apparently irreconcilable concepts. On the one hand is Israel's security, and the expectation that each and every citizen contribute to offsetting the Arab numerical advantage; on the other the rigid precepts of the Torah, which expressly forbid women to wear uniform or carry arms.

A related source of contention is the issue of alternative national service for those women who are exempt from military service — in hospitals, in schools or border settlements. The law, until the present government came into power, was clear: those women who prove that they are from bona fide religious backgrounds, to

the satisfaction of a rabbinical tribunal, were exempt from conscription but liable for alternate service. The law, however, was never enforced, and some 20 per cent of all women in Israel were exempted from any form of national service. There were periodic moans and groans from liberal forums, but the issue came to a head only last year.

THEN, THE small Agudat Yisrael Party, whose four members in the Knesset hold the balance between the survival and demise of the Begin government, managed to implement a dormant coalition agreement making it possible for almost any female to avoid military or national service by merely declaring she was religious.

Within months of the new arrangement coming into effect, the number of women opting out of two years of military service began to rise alarmingly.

The reasons were manifold: some women, who are indeed religious but who previously would have preferred to avoid the embarrassment of appearing before three probing inquisitors, were now spared the indignity. Others, totally irreligious, simply took advantage of the new laxity and made the declaration despite the threat of sanction by the Defence Ministry against any person found to be lying. There were also open refusals to join the army by women who hoped that by joining the ranks of the evaders and causing a real drop in the number of conscripts, the country would be forced to change the existing legislation and reinstitute equal service for all.

Whatever the motive, the army and the country's security are suffering. Last year, according to Chief of IDF Manpower, Aluf Moshe Natvi, only 52.2 per cent of all women in Israel of army age were inducted — a drop of over three per cent from 1978. Although for security reasons, the IDF refuses to give out absolute

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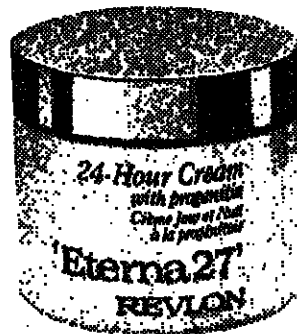
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ISRAEL A to Z



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(Continued from page 15)
numbers so as not to reveal the country's military manpower capability, it is understood that the three per cent translates into several thousand women. Nativ claims as well, and he is supported by Chief of the Women's Corps, Aluf-Mishne Dalia Raz, that this loss is serious in terms of the overall capability of the IDF.

Israel is faced with a military manpower problem of worrisome proportions. There has not been enough immigration. The birth rate is gradually declining, and now stands at around 3.1,000. All this is taking place while the confrontation states are arming at an unprecedented rate, and Israel has to purchase huge amounts of equipment to maintain the military balance: new equipment means more — or greater utilization of existing — manpower and one of the major manifestations of this was a more meaningful role for women in the armed services.

THE PAST three years have witnessed a quiet revolution. From a force that was almost entirely clerical, the IDF Women's Corps today boasts graduates of the general staff and command college; graduates of naval maritime masters' courses; tank drivers and jet fighter mechanics. Women hold key positions in the communications corps and are the backbone of the country's early warning system. They are drivers and teachers. They train men in artillery. They hold key positions in intelligence and manage the bulk of sophisticated computer operations.

It is ironic that this growing need for manpower and beginnings of a real role for women in uniform came at precisely the same time that the government cracked under pressure from the ultra-Orthodox religious factions and liberalized the exemption procedures.

According to Nativ, in 1978, 27.8 per cent of all women liable for military service were exempted. This is a 7.3 per cent increase over 1976. Shulamit Aloni, one of the leading figures in the Knesset against religious coercion in general and exemption from military service for religious reasons in particular, claims that in 1979 the number rose by another 14 per cent. Neither Nativ nor Raz deny Aloni's figures, but claim that they still do not have the final data for last year.

ALONI ALSO claims — and again there seems to be no argument with her conclusions in either the defence ministry or the army — that the rise cannot be attributed to girls from religious homes, but to those "who have been tempted to lie and cheat" by the government's subjugation to the Orthodox parties.

The other side of Aloni's fight is against sexual abuse in the army. At the height of the controversy over women's service in 1978, as the religious parties explained why they were opposed to sending their daughters into service, details of "sordid behaviour" in uniform crept into the headlines. There were few descriptions of officers taking advantage of



Woman sergeant ready for parachute jump into sea. (Rubinger)

young girls by using their rank to get favours. There were reports of frequent pregnancies, and the free distribution of birth control pills.

The furor was fanned by an unfortunate case last year when no less a personage than the commanding officer of the navy, Aluf Michael Barkai, was discharged after being accused — but not convicted — of sexually assaulting a recruit. Barkai's behaviour was generally considered symptomatic rather than an isolated incident.

Shulamit Aloni claims that there are dozens more cases of sexual abuse in the army. She is prepared to admit this, even though aware that the ultimate analysis, revelations of this type may harm her case against religious exemptions. She relates that currently there is a colonel, married and the father of five children, and himself an observant Jew, who is now up before a military court for abusing his 18-year-old secretary. What makes the case especially severe, according to Aloni, is that the sergeant, while trying to force the girl soldier into bed, argued that any girl who chooses to serve in the army is by definition, in religious eyes, "loose". So why should she object to his advances?

The colonel's perception is consistent with the teachings of the sages. Military service for women has been declared by many leading rabbis as on a par with the three deeds that one should die rather than commit: prostitution, idol worship, and murder. This was the learned opinion of Rabbi Zvi Pessah Frank, the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem — a sage generally considered both lenient and liberal in his views — and Rabbi Uziel and Herzog. They based themselves on the unequivocal teachings of the Torah and the interpretation of Maimonides that absolutely forbids a woman to wear a military uniform and carry arms — roles intended for men alone. The act of doing so, or encouraging another to do so, is the equivalent, according to Orthodox law, of destroying the Temple.

Other reasons are given for the prohibition of religious

females from doing any type of national service — even a stint of duty in a hospital or school. The rabbis say that the role of the female in Jewish society is clearly defined. It is in the home. The interpretation of a modern-day sage, the Hazon Ish, who died in 1980, is used as a basis for argument. To remove the Jewish daughter from the surroundings of her home and the influence of her parents, before she is married, is tantamount to making her sin. He who so does is guilty of a misdeed worse than murder.

AT ISSUE is not only the fate of ultra-Orthodox women and their attitude to military service. The army, and Israel, could no doubt live with several hundred exemptions per year. But the problem is the effect this has had on the periphery. The open debate on morals in the army, and the tangible proof of moral turpitude, provided by senior officers like Barkai, has led to a genuine reticence among traditional families, mainly those of Orthodox backgrounds who still consider the loss of their daughter's virginity before marriage as a major catastrophe, to send their daughters into service.

It has led to a decrease in the willingness of the religious Zionist community to serve. Though nationalists, they are beginning to seek frameworks other than the IDF to express their nationalism. One such framework is, of course, national service. But, according to figures released recently, only one third of the 4,600 women who completed religious high schools and seminaries went into active military or national service — a fact published by the National Religious Party itself.

Another issue is the quality of the role played by women in the IDF. There has been some advancement, admits Aluf-Mishne Raz, but the situation is still far from satisfactory. The highest rank ever attained by a woman in the IDF is Aluf-Mishne (Colonel). There are only three. Only three women have completed Staff and Command colleges. There are no women pilots, even in transport aircraft. (One woman pilot;

Yael Rom, graduated in the '80s. Of the 700 occupations in the IDF only 200 are open to women. Over 50 per cent of all women in uniform work in service units, but in fact the actual number is much higher than that, considering that most of the jobs filled by women in combat and field units are clerical.

While there are no women cooks — "we try not to duplicate the role of the woman in the home in the army," Raz says — I have yet to enter an officer's office and have coffee made for me by a male.

The country's television screens project a different reality in periodic service announcements paid for by the IDF. The public is shown an Israeli-made Chariot tank speeding through the dunes driven by a woman soldier. We all know, however, that her role will be limited to instructing men on simulators during tank driving courses. We are shown women divers in the navy. Their role is largely demonstrative. Their actual job is to scrub barnacles off the hulls of ships in port.

"Until the army decides — if it ever decides — to allow women into combat, that's the way it's going to be," says Raz. The reasons for this are



Shulamit Aloni

many. One of those commonly given is the fate of any woman taken captive by the enemy. Shulamit Aloni rejects this as nonsense. In the last war the Syrians castrated soldiers who fell into their hands. Does this now mean that we should not draft men into combat? she asks.

Raz has an additional — more plausible — explanation. The IDF, she points out correctly, is composed some 80 per cent of reserves. It has a small standing service (two years for women, three for men) and people who have decided to make the military their career. Men are liable for reserve duty until the age of 35; women until 25, and that is on condition that they do not marry, or become

pregnant. A pilot's course, for example, takes two full years. Other courses range from six months to eight months.

"With men, the IDF can more than recoup its investment," Raz explains. "They have them in reserve forms for 35 years after they complete their compulsory service. But the state can use women's skills for a maximum of only two or three years, given the average time an Israeli woman serves in the reserves after her discharge."

The women's liberation movement is in a quandary on how to deal with the problem. They have no clear demands. They seem to accept the fact that it is economically not viable to invest huge amounts in training personnel — male or female — who will not be fully utilized. Money is as scarce as manpower and no one is going to advocate national waste for the sake of a hazy ideal. Instead they have concentrated on trying to end de facto sexist discrimination by making it easier for women who feel they have been abused while in uniform to use the channels of complaint open to them.

Here the battle seems to have been singularly successful. The number of women complaining about the sexist behaviour of



A/M Dafna Raz

their male superiors has risen dramatically.

"It is not because there are more instances of abuse to complain about," says Raz, "but because the IDF has, after adequate prodding, ensured the right type of machinery that makes complaint without fear of sanction, possible."

The feminist movement has been successful in other ways as well. A female soldier who becomes pregnant can directly get an abortion at military expense. The girl's parents will not be informed, and no disciplinary action will be taken against her.

"But these are tangential issues and are treated as such," says Raz. "As far as I'm concerned,

there is equality — full equality, where circumstances permit. I earn exactly what a male colonel earns. In jobs that are held by men and women in the service, there is absolute equality in terms of advancement and promotion," says Raz.

As Raz speaks just 500 metres from her window, across the road from the Defence Ministry, several hundred young women are holding a round-the-clock demonstration. They are demanding that the burden be shared fairly. Several women in Israel have already been jailed for refusing to do their reserve duty. There is equal callous.

Despite the current lull women's service is an issue more than ever before.

Aluf Mishne Raz admits "But now I must run," she says, cutting the interview short. "I promised my son out there," she indicates in the direction of the waiting room with a well-manicured finger-nail, "that I would take him to buy drums today. I may be a colonel, but I'm a mother first."

(A longer version of this article first appeared in Find Magazine of Long Island.)

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ASK THE average "Mabat" viewer to name a woman TV reporter and he's likely to say: Barbara Walters. One can't blame him for not choosing someone closer to home — there are no women correspondents at Israel TV.

The number of women reporters at Kol Yisrael can be counted on the fingers of one hand — with a few fingers left to make coffee for the boys in the office.

Even in newspapers, where there are quite a few women in editing jobs, they are rare in reporters' positions. Given a day to prepare a list of women reporters, the secretary of the Jerusalem Journalists' Association immediately listed about a dozen women from among hundreds of members without having to resort to his lists.

While women who would like journalists' jobs in the media are the most directly affected, women in general also lose from the lack of women on the screen and in the press. The male predominance in the media both reflects the lower status of women in society, and reinforces it. Not only is the female point of view neglected, but women — and girls — have no one to look up to as role models in positions of power.

ARE WOMEN unfit for reporting jobs? Are they unwilling to make the sacrifices necessary to succeed at such a demanding career? Or are the men who hire the reporting staff "male chauvinists" who stand in their way?

There is no unanimity on the issue among editors, reporters and broadcasters of both sexes. Yael Chen, at 36, holds one of the most powerful and prestigious positions in Israel TV's news department and is thus an exception to the rule.

"A woman who comes here," says the person responsible for the Friday newsmagazine, "has to be a much better than a man to get a chance."

After studying sociology and psychology at the Hebrew University and doing work towards a Master's degree at Brandeis, Chen went to work at Israel Radio for six months but left because she didn't like routine desk work and saw no place for advancement. Noticing an advertisement for a TV journalist's course at the Broadcasting Authority, in 1974, Chen applied and passed the tests. Zvi Gil of the news department took her on, and Dan Shilon moved her from foreign news editing to a "Mabat" editor. The current news department head, Haim Yavin, gave her a "big push" by making her editor of the highly regarded and controversial Friday newsmagazine.

She herself has no complaints against her colleagues. "I never had trouble," she asserts, "but I was willing to devote long hours to my work." She regularly puts in 60 or 70 hours a week — usually ending her working day late at night.

TWO WOMEN worked as reporters at TV House a few years ago, covering consumerism and other "women's topics." But, says Chen, they were quickly "broken" — either by the impossibly long

Making it in the media

Judy Siegel tries to find out why there is no Barbara Walters in Israeli television.



U.S. newscaster Barbara Walters and daughter before interview with Mr. Begin.

Yael Chen, Israel TV editor.

hours or the attitudes of their male colleagues — or both. Chen notes that it is difficult for a woman reporter to handle the three-man technician team with which journalists have to work all day.

Technicians are pretty tough, and they don't like taking orders. (But a veteran technician-cameraman who heard this view denied that being female has anything to do with it. "We're tough on any new reporter at first — to see whether he knows what he's doing. If he's no good, we'll make his life difficult — whether it's a man or a woman.")

Asked why there are so many women "anchormen" and correspondents in the American media, Chen suggests that the U.S. networks and newspapers made a conscious effort to bring in women — as they did with Black and other minorities. Today, there is almost an unconscious quota. Such an "affirmative action" policy has changed the face of the American media from an all-male bastion in the 1950s and early '60s, when women were only go-fers and "800s" girls — to the '70s and '80s, when Barbara Walters became the highest-paid journalist in American history.

Another reason for the vast difference between the U.S. and Israel on this question, adds Chen, is there is a "less of the Yiddish-mama syndrome" in America. "There are very many career women in the U.S. who don't feel that they are working only until they marry and have children," she says. "In Israel, women who put their careers first are viewed by society with a very jaundiced eye."

CHEN MARRIED Gidon Eshet, Yediot Aharonot's economic reporter — three months ago. Since Gidon understands the exigencies of the news business and is "very supportive," Yael finds married life easier on the career than her singlehood.

"He goes shopping and has the soup ready when I come home from a long day of work," she says with a smile. "Before, I was first able to air out the apartment at 10 p.m. instead of the morning and had to start cleaning up the mess at night. When they got married, 'people asked me: 'How does your husband stand for your working such long hours?' But they don't ask Haim Yavin if his wife minds that he works long hours. There's a double standard," asserts Chen.

TV news is a pressure cooker, and the heat is often intensified by cutthroat competition among prima donnas who all want the most prestigious beats and the most time on the screen. Some women who work on the production staff are scared away from competing for a journalist's job because of such pressures. "You can't be a dainty lady here," says Chen. At a staff meeting, if a shapely woman goes by, her male colleagues often respond with a remark of sexual innuendo. "I shut up and don't say anything," she admits frankly. "It rarely bothers me; I'm used to it."

CHEN DISMISSES the theory that if women reporters were added to the news staff, they would lend a more human or positive aspect to "Mabat" — a need that has been raised often of late. "My show is known as the most aggressive and hard-hitting part of the news department," she maintains. "Qualified women should not be prevented from working here because discrimination is wrong."

TAMMY MORAG, the second of the three women journalists in the news department (Sari Raz, the occasional newscaster who does research assignments as well, is the third) takes a less benign view than Chen. She is convinced that "male chauvinism" is responsible for the death of women in TV news.

MORAG, who edits foreign news for "Mabat," joined the Broadcasting Authority 11 years ago after passing a course for radio editors. She moved to TV news in 1975.

She goes over foreign news broadcasts that are sent here by satellite, and notices that there are many women reporters abroad. When MORAG dreamed of being a reporter, she was told: "What do you want it for? Women don't have to be reporters."

If the bosses really wanted women correspondents, they could hire two women half time to cover the same beat. "But no one ever thought of that," she says.

Asked why there are no women reporters, the bosses scratch their heads. "You know," says one, "I really don't know. But there's nothing that can be done now. We're not hiring anyone because of the budget cuts."

AMIR SHAVIV, an editor of "Almost Midnight" who is completing his degree in political science at the university, calls himself a "feminist," and puts his principles to work on the job. "From time to time," he says, "a reporter will prepare a story about price rises, for example, and start it off: 'Well, ladies, the bad news is that soap will cost more from tomorrow.'"

Recently, his wife Andy gave birth to their first child, and Amir is not ashamed to say that he dapers the baby and cleans the house as well as his wife. "I believe that if the husband and wife work outside the home it's unfair for the woman to do all the housework when she comes home. Sharing the work is only logical; I don't believe in anatomical determinism."

(Shaviv contrasts sharply with a senior TV journalist who, according to department gossip, refused to go along

with his wife's desire for her own career when he was working abroad. She took a job anyway, and the journalist wouldn't lift a finger in the house. At times, their children had to go to neighbours to ask for food because no one was around to feed them.)

Shaviv recalls that in the early days of the department, a news director opposed hiring women as newscasters, on the grounds that "if a woman announced an earthquake or some other tragedy, no one would believe her."

ATTITUDES have changed since then, but while there is no "conscious discrimination" against women, there hasn't been an effort to bring in qualified women.

The Broadcasting Authority, ironically, has a large number of women producers, directors (even a few cameramen), programme editors and department heads. Many of them worked their way up from secretaries and production assistants. But there is no similar path of entry for journalists.

"The explanation of 'long hours' and 'family responsibility' seems to be apt when one considers the newspapers. There are women reporters — even a diplomatic correspondent and political reporters — but it is hard to name women reporters who have young children. Hanna Zemer, editor of *Davar*, and an exceptionally intelligent and articulate woman, is often used as an example of what can be accomplished 'if a woman really tried hard.'"

Still, there is a feeling that something is nevertheless wrong. Female newspaper reporters were very uncomfortable when asked to talk about the question of discrimination and opportunity for women in the press. "If I talk on the record," said one, "people will say I'm bitter. It's better to keep my mouth shut."

(Continued from page 9)

developed which, written by women and dealing with women's problems, also has a women's readership upon which it depends. But this has not come to Israel. There is no feminist literary movement here," she observed over ice coffee in a North Tel Aviv cafe.

Dividing her week between Jerusalem where she teaches and Tel Aviv where she lives with her physicist husband and two daughters, Professor Kartun-Blum partakes of two worlds: the high seriousness of Jerusalem and the frenetic Tel Aviv scene. In the tradition of Nathan Alterman about whom she is presently writing a book, she is a lover of the city with its fast tempo, literary cafes and busy cultural life.

Nevertheless, she is able to maintain a high level of scholarship. Her book on the poetess Yechaveh Bat Miriam which recently appeared was well received. "There was something primal, elemental about Bat Miriam. She had a proud nobility," Ruth Kartun-Blum exclaimed. "She expressed Jewish women by writing her early poems in the form of technical women's prayers."

Returning to our discussion on feminist writing she put women's writing in Israel in the perspective of Hebrew literature in general, indicating that Israeli literature has its own intrinsic logic of development and has other goals equal to as compelling as feminist ones to grapple with.

Presenting the sweeping movement of Hebrew literature she explained, "In the past Hebrew literature was at the vanguard of Zionism. One could not understand Zionism goals without understanding their germination in Hebrew literature. Simon Halkin called Hebrew literature a 'Memorial Book' of the Jewish people where one grapples with one's connection to the Jewish people and past. Even when antagonism was expressed to the society by writers there was commitment."

"Now," she continued, "writers are turning to look at their personal backgrounds. There is a search back into the sources. They are seeking the 'I' in the 'I'. They are saying, 'We will be our father's children.' Since Israel's come from so many backgrounds, Sephardic writers are beginning to write about their backgrounds, writing is becoming more local, more varied. It no longer expresses a monolithic sensibility. As far as women are concerned this means that there is no one image of the Israeli woman being presented in the literature. There are Sephardic women, women from many countries."

Upon parting from Ruth Kartun-Blum in the bustling Tel Aviv street, I suddenly became aware of the variety of women of different backgrounds around me. It reinforced the realization that while women in the U.S. were concerned with defining the parameters of their woman's identity, the Israeli woman is grappling with the emerging character of the Jewish State and the multifarious ethnic elements involved.



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THE TWO FACES OF WIZO

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Feminine or Feminist? Both or neither, depending on how you look at it, say the members of Wizo. At any rate they certainly do not consider these terms mutually exclusive. And in fact Wizo is as active in promoting women's rights as it is in the more typically "feminine" field of family welfare, and sees nothing odd in the seeming paradox.

How this dichotomy came about, at least in the Israeli federation, is explained in detail in a recently completed research project of Tel Aviv University's Institute of Social Research, "A Volunteer Woman's Organisation

in a Society-In-The-Making: Wizo's Contribution to the Israeli Society." In a section on the early years of the movement (founded in England in 1920 to provide assistance for the women and children of Eretz Yisrael) one chapter deals with the image of the woman prevailing in the Yishuv at that time and its influence on Wizo's work. In the course of their research, the authors explain, the fact soon emerged that there were, at that time, two distinct but equally prevalent images — the traditional one of the devoted wife and mother whose "place is in the home," and the revolutionary one

of the halutzot — the young pioneering women who at all costs demanded equal work and equal rights. Each of these two types of women also had their own appropriate organisation — for women in the one case and equal rights in the other.

By the early thirties Wizo had assimilated both images and both organisations, and become the Wizo we know today — a movement which has literally taken the best of both worlds, attaching equal importance to child care institutions and legal advice bureaux, cookery courses and seminars on political and civic

awareness, home industries and the Council for the Status of Women; a movement which, having no preconceived notions as to a woman's (and a women's organisation's) place in the scheme of things, can attract women of every sort into its ranks, helping them develop their potential for their own benefit; and that of society as a whole; and which has the adaptability to enable it to respond effectively to the most varied needs of such a heterogeneous population as Israel's, and the flexibility to adjust its services to changing needs and itself to meet new challenges. And therein lies its strength.

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